

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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USINT ALGIERS

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T STATE 216264

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, XF

SUBJECT: SYRIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS

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REF.: TEL AVIV 8827 (NOTAL)

1. DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD
CEASE-FIRE AND NEGOTIATIONS FOLLOWS AS REQUESTED IN REFTEL:

2. IN A LETTER DATED OCTOBER 23, 1973 TO THE UN SECRETARY
GENERAL, SYRIAN VICE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DR. MOHAMED ZAKARYIA ISMAIL, SAID THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT
ACCEPTS UN RESOLUTION 338 OF OCTOBER 22, 1973, BUT UNDER-
STOOD THE RESOLUTION TO BE BASED ON:

(A) "THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ISRAELI FORCES
FROM ALL THE ARAB TERRITORIES WHICH WERE OCCUPIED IN JUNE
1967 AND SUBSEQUENTLY;

(B) "THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE LEGITIMATE NATIONAL
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
RESOLUTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

3. IN AN IMPORTANT SPEECH DELIVERED ON SYRIAN RADIO
OCTOBER 29, 1973, PRESIDENT ASAD ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO
SYRIA'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE AND UN RESOLUTION 338.
ASAD MADE THE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS:

(A) SYRIA'S OBJECTIVE REMAINS "LIBERATION OF THE
OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORY AND RESTORATION OF THE PALESTINIAN
PEOPLE'S RIGHTS."

(B) RESOLUTION 338 CAME AS A SURPRISE TO SYRIA AND
PLACED "NEW CONDITIONS" BEFORE SYRIA AS A MAIN PARTY TO
THE HOSTILITIES. SYRIA HAD BEEN CONTEMPLATING A LONG-
TERM BATTLE TO LIBERATE THE TERRITORIES.

(C) IN SYRIA'S CONTACTS WITH ARAB STATES AND THE
SOVIET UNION, ASAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM PRESIDENT
SADAT THAT SADAT HAD RECEIVED THE SOVIET LEADERS'
GUARANTEES THAT ISRAEL WOULD WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM ALL
THE ARAB TERRITORIES. ALSO, THE SOVIETS ASSURED SYRIA
THAT THE U.S.S.R.'S STAND ON THIS ISSUE CORRESPONDED
WITH THAT OF SYRIA: I.E., THAT THE DRAFTERS OF UN
RESOLUTION 338 WERE GUIDED BY SYRIA'S STRESS ON ISRAEL'S
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COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES
AND RESTORATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

(D) UN RESOLUTION 338 IS A RESULT OF ARAB MILITARY
STEADFASTNESS. IN 1967, WHEN THE ARABS WERE UNABLE TO
STAND FAST, ONLY A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A CEASEFIRE
WAS PASSED FOLLOWED SIX MONTHS LATER BY UN RESOLUTION 242.
THIS TIME IT WAS THE ARAB RESOLVE THAT PROMPTED THE

ISSUANCE OF A RESOLUTION EMBODYING A TOTAL CONCEPT FOR A RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM IN THIS AREA. SYRIA'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE BASIS OF THAT SOLUTION IS (A) ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ARAB TERRITORY AND (B) GUARANTEEING THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS.

(E) IF THIS POLITICAL STAGE OF "THE STRUGGLE" PROVES TO BE NEGATIVE, SYRIA WILL RESUME THE FIGHTING.

4. SYRIA'S ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION 338 SHOWS MORE MODERATION ON THE PART OF THE SYRIANS THAN ONE IS ACCUSTOMED TO. IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT BY ACCEPTING RESOLUTION 338, THE SYRIANS HAVE AT LEAST IMPLICITLY ACCEPTED RESOLUTION 242, SINCE THE LATTER IS A PART OF THE FORMER. THE SYRIANS PROBABLY PREFER TO LEAVE THIS POINT AMBIGUOUS AND TO STAND ON THEIR INTERPRETATION OF 338 AS REQUIRING COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS. AS ALWAYS, THERE SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERABLE AMBIVALENCE IN SYRIA'S STAND: THEY WANT TO BE MOST OUTSPOKEN CHAMPIONS OF THE ARAB CAUSE BUT AT THE SAME TIME DO NOT WANT TO BE LEFT OUT OF WHAT MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENTS. KISSINGER

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